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FURTHER REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PURSUANT TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 749 (1992)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 749, the Security Council decided "to authorize the earliest possible full deployment of UNPROFOR". The present report is submitted in order to inform the Council of progress made thus far towards the full deployment of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and to describe the Force's experiences in its earliest stages.

II. DEPLOYMENT

2. As of 24 April 1992, UNPROFOR had a strength of 8,332, including 7,975 military personnel. Its headquarters has been established in Sarajevo and is fully operational, with the majority (some 350) of the headquarters military personnel already located there.

3. In Sector East (Eastern Slavonia), the UNPROFOR military component, consisting of battalions from Russia and Belgium (1,293 personnel), had attained full strength on the ground as of 18 April. The Force Commander is examining the possibility of assuming his responsibilities in the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA) in this Sector in the first week of May.

4. In Sector West (Western Slavonia), the Canadian infantry battalion has been deployed in full. However, for budgetary reasons, it has been decided to deploy the personnel and equipment of the other three battalions in this Sector (from Argentina, Nepal and Jordan) primarily by surface means. These battalions will not, therefore, arrive in theatre until mid-May. The present military strength in this Sector is 1,373.

5. In Sector North (the northern part of the Krajina), battalions from Denmark and Poland have been deployed. The arrival of the personnel and equipment of the third battalion from Nigeria is expected by the end of May. A total of 2,046 military personnel are currently deployed in this Sector.

6. In Sector South (the southern part of the Krajina), battalions from France and Czechoslovakia (total 1,505 personnel) have been fully deployed and a third battalion from Kenya is expected in mid-May.

7. The full complement of 102 United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) is present in the area of operations. The Chief Military Observer is in the process of implementing the plan for an accelerated deployment of some 40 of these observers to the Mostar area of Bosnia-Hercegovina on 30 April. They will conduct several patrols daily within the opstine of Mostar, Caplinja, Stolac and Trebinje in order to help defuse tensions in those areas. They will maintain liaison with all sides, conduct investigations and provide their good offices to resolve difficulties. The remaining UNMOs will assist, as originally planned, in monitoring the planned withdrawal of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) from the UNPAs in Croatia. It may be necessary to reinforce their numbers if, at that time, the situation in the Mostar area makes it impossible for the 40 UNMOs referred to above to return to the UNPAs to participate in this work.

8. The United Nations Civilian Police (UNCIVPOL) contingent has a total of 290 officers in the mission area. The arrival of the remaining 230 UNCIVPOL officers, which has been delayed for budgetary reasons as well as lack of transport in the area of operations, will occur during the second half of May.

9. The infantry battalions are already engaged in actively patrolling throughout each of the sectors. In this way a United Nations presence is maintained even in those areas which are not yet permanently manned pending the arrival of the remaining battalions. Battalions already assigned to their own areas are establishing liaison with both sides at various levels, arranging crossing points, preparing positions, patrolling and siting checkpoints and observation posts.

10. For a number of practical, operational and security reasons, the Force Commander has recommended, and I have agreed, that the proposed Logistics Base should not be established at Banja Luka. The elements intended to be deployed in Banja Luka will instead be deployed at the two other logistics bases in Belgrade and Zagreb. The other deployment plans proposed in annex III to my predecessor's report of 11 December 1991 (S/23280, annex III) and further described in my reports of 15 February (S/23592) and 2 April (S/23777) remain substantially in force.

III. COOPERATION OF THE PARTIES

11. Progress has been made towards the conclusion of status-of-forces arrangements with the parties. A final text has been agreed with the authorities of Bosnia-Hercegovina, and a tentative agreement on a final text has been arrived at with the Croation authorites. However, protracted negotiations continue with the Government of Yugoslavia. The primary differences have related to the provision of goods and services to UNPROFOR by the various Yugoslav parties either free of charge or on the most favourable

terms. The Government of Yugoslavia and the JNA have, however, provided some 84 vehicles of various types and have recently made available four helicopters for UNPROFOR's use for casualty evacuation in the early stages of its deployment.

12. During the last few weeks there have been disturbing cases, both in the UNPAs and in Bosnia-Hercegovina, in which combatants on both sides have used United Nations insignia on their vehicles and uniforms. On 10 April a white helicopter with United Nations markings was observed landing at Bilece in the Mostar area (JNA helicopters made available to UNPROFOR for medical evacuation are identified by a red cross and do not display United Nations markings). Protests have been lodged at the appropriate levels. Each side holds the other responsible for incidents involving United Nations insignia, while extending assurances that such activity will not be permitted by it. This abuse of United Nations insignia is irresponsible and dangerous. If it persists, it will call seriously into question the genuineness of the parties' undertakings to cooperate with UNPROFOR.

13. There have been a number of incidents of small arms fire directed at UNPROFOR personnel in the UNPAs. In one recent instance, a drunken Croatian Army soldier fired a machine-gun burst at an UNPROFOR sentry; in another, the perpetrators were identified as drunken JNA soldiers who have been apprehended and disciplined. The persistence of cease-fire violations, even in the areas where UNPROFOR is deployed, remains disquieting. These have hindered UNPROFOR's activities and there has been an unacceptable level of firings close to its personnel. The Force's freedom of movement both by land and by air has also been restricted on several occasions. In Sector North, UNPROFOR patrols have been stopped by local police, who in one instance fired in the air to make an UNPROFOR patrol turn back. In other instances, UNPROFOR patrols have been restricted as to the time they may spend in an area or have been prohibited access to certain locations in an area. These incidents have all been protested.

14. Discussions with both sides on the establishment of an "air corridor" permitting UNPROFOR flights to and from Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb as well as over the UNPAs have, however, made satisfactory progress, with the cooperation of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). A technical agreement was concluded on 22 April in Budapest confirming the following arrangements: (a) freedom to fly in the Sarajevo-Belgrade-Zagreb triangle; (b) freedom for medical evacuation and aircraft maintenance movement from the UNPAs to their various destinations; and (c) freedom to fly into Zagreb for logistical purposes. Agreement on freedom to fly above the UNPAs has in principle been reached, but further discussions are still required on certain aspects of the overall regime for the "UN Special Use Airspace".

15. As indicated above, UNPROFOR will not be in a position to assume its responsibilities in all the UNPAs for another two to three weeks. During this delicate transitional period it is of the greatest importance that the actions of all parties should conform with the letter and spirit of the approved concept for UNPROFOR. I regret to have to report to the Security Council that this principle is not universally observed.

16. The JNA has begun withdrawing from some of its locations in the UNPAs. It has been observed that before doing so it is transferring arms and ammunition to the local territorial defence forces, which are due to be demobilized as soon as UNPROFOR is fully deployed. UNPROFOR has also observed that the JNA is transferring both vehicles and personnel to the local police or milicija. The authorities in Belgrade have explained that what is happening is that police personnel, who were temporarily attached to the JNA when the fighting began, are now returning to their normal law and order duties. These developments nevertheless cause concern in the context of UNPROFOR's responsibilities related to the existing arrangements for local administration and the maintenance of public order (see S/23592, para. 17).

17. UNPROFOR has also confirmed several reports of the forcible evacuation of minority populations from their homes in the UNPAs, especially in Eastern Slavonia. In some cases, it has received reports of threatened or potential incidents of this kind which it has been able to control by preventive patrolling. In other instances, however, it has proved unable to prevent the displacement of civilians. On 20 April, in Sector East, UNPROFOR witnessed the expulsion of 107 Croats from Vukovar, 100 from Tenja and 21 from Maranci, all of whom were obliged to sign a form declaring their departures to be voluntary. This and similar incidents, which seem to reflect a pattern of systematic harassment of minority populations, have been vigorously protested. UNPROFOR has also requested the authorities in Belgrade to conduct a full investigation. In the meantime, UNPROFOR has stepped up its patrols in Sector East, including at night, in the hope of forestalling further incidents. Any instance of forcible displacement of civilians is viewed by the United Nations with the utmost gravity. The persistence of such incidents is not only a violation of internationally recognized humanitarian principles but also, when they occur in the UNPAs, of the letter and the spirit of the agreed Plan (S/23280, annex III).

IV. THE SITUATION IN SARAJEVO

18. The situation in Sarajevo continues to deteriorate and as Bosnia-Hercegovina slides into anarchy, the problems of operating a headquarters in such an environment increase. Movement in and out of Sarajevo is difficult in the extreme and movement within Sarajevo is dangerous. On 15 April two UNMOs were stopped at a checkpoint manned by irregulars just outside the city and deprived of their vehicle at gunpoint. (The vehicle has since been found by the JNA and returned to UNPROFOR.) Air travel to and from Sarajevo airport has also been frequently interrupted, imposing severe delays upon senior UNPROFOR personnel, who have been obliged to spend a disproportionate amount of time on travel to and from Sarajevo. Most UNPROFOR personnel are living in the basement of the headquarters building, as movement between it and their accommodation is frequently impossible. Food and fuel is running short. The implications of this critical situation for the effectiveness of UNPROFOR are being closely monitored by the Force Commander.

19. To the extent possible, UNPROFOR has used its good offices and its limited headquarters resources to provide humanitarian support to those in need as a result of the fighting in Sarajevo. It has helped to evacuate wounded civilians to medical institutions, and in one instance moved 50 elderly and wounded patients out of a burning hospital. While such activities are clearly necessary in the circumstances, the resources at UNPROFOR's disposal do not permit it to extend protection to all humanitarian operations in Bosnia-Hercegovina.

V. OBSERVATIONS

20. UNPROFOR will be ready to assume in full its responsibilities in the UNPAs by the middle of May as indicated in annex I of my report of 2 April 1992 (S/23777). This is a later date than I would have wished. The delay has primarily been due to the time it takes to transfer infantry battalions, and especially their equipment, from distant countries to the mission area at costs acceptable to the Member States. The fighting in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia-Hercegovina has also been a complicating factor. Nevertheless, it has so far been possible to maintain the schedule indicated in my last report to the Security Council.

21. Some of the difficulties which UNPROFOR has encountered are of a kind which frequently occur when a new peace-keeping operation is established. But others do raise concern about the commitment of the parties to the basic principles of the UNPROFOR concept, namely the demilitarization of the UNPAs, maintenance of the existing arrangements for local administration and public order and the voluntary return to their homes of persons displaced by the recent fighting.

22. In discussions with UNPROFOR, both sides have also raised issues which go beyond the existing provisions of the United Nations peace-keeping Plan. The authorities in both Belgrade and Zagreb have drawn UNPROFOR's attention to the problem of certain areas in Croatia which are at present controlled by the JNA but are outside the agreed boundaries of the UNPAs. The federal authorities have proposed that these areas, inhabited primarily by Serbs, be included within the UNPAs, while the Croatian side has sought UNPROFOR's assistance with regard to the presence of Serb irregular forces in these areas, without including them in the UNPAs. Consultations continue with both sides on these questions, in view of their implications for UNPROFOR's viability. Further consultations will also be required in regard to a request received from the Croatian authorities on 22 April for UNPROFOR to restore rail, road, river and air traffic and communications across the Republic of Croatia (and therefore through the UNPAs), another subject not covered by the agreed Plan.

23. The first few weeks of the deployment of UNPROFOR have thus made clear the complexity of the challenge which confronts the Force and the United Nations as a whole. The Force Commander, Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar, his staff and units in the field have conducted themselves with courage, competence and an exemplary sense of responsibility. I should like to pay tribute to their performance and dedication in this difficult environment.